

night and missed rollcall vote No. 373. Had I been present I would have voted "aye."

THE AMERICAN DREAM CHALLENGE

HON. BARNEY FRANK

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, July 11, 2000

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. Mr. Speaker, from time to time I have expressed here my great admiration for the American Dream Challenge, a very creative effort to help raise funds for young people to pay for college. This program was originated by Dr. Irving Fradkin of Fall River, Massachusetts, and he continues after many years of hard work to be a dedicated parent to this program. Long before it became fashionable, Dr. Fradkin understood the importance of trying to make sure that every young person had the financial means to pursue a college education, and he is justly and widely respected in the Greater Fall River community for this commitment. Dr. Fradkin understands that it is important to instill the desire for higher education early, and so his program begins with students in the fourth grade, and works at various points throughout their education in this regard.

Mr. Speaker, I submit two articles which testify to the power of Dr. Fradkin's ideas and of his work to be printed here, so that other communities may benefit from knowing of this example and, I hope, emulate it.

The first document is a letter from Susan Lanyon who teaches fourth grade at the Wiley School. The second is an excellent article from the Durfee Hilltop, by Renee Tessier. The Durfee Hilltop is the newspaper of Durfee High School, the public high school in Fall River.

AMERICAN DREAM CHALLENGE IS INSPIRING
(By Susan Lanyon, fourth-grade teacher,
Wiley School, Fall River)

Twenty-seven years ago I had three reasons for entering the teaching profession: I loved learning and longed to share that joy, I had a deep love for children, and I wanted to make a difference in the lives of young people.

I still feel the same way today, but now there's a program that helps me to make that difference. It started in 1994 and it's called the American Dream Challenge.

Thanks to Dr. Irving Fradkin, I now have the pleasure of including this scholarship program in my fourth-grade agenda. I have learned that its benefits are immeasurable; it not only affects the scholarship winners, it also has an effect on every child, as together we take a special moment to share deep thoughts about the future benefits of a sound education.

I have become deeply aware that 9 and 10-year-olds do have high hopes and dreams that are worthy and sincere. This has become one of my many regards of teaching, the joy of listening to their ideas.

The American Dream Challenge begins when I take a minute to share my thoughts with my students about how special my college education is to me. They catch my enthusiasm and the dreams begin!

Then Dr. Fradkin and the Rev. Robert Lawrence, another true friend of education, often make a visit, and speak further with them, telling these precious fourth-graders exactly how special they are.

They also convince them that they can become anything their hearts desire with only two things needed—the right attitude and a proper education.

Their eyes light up, and the seeds are planted!

Next, we return to our writing class and brainstorm as a team. Now we have to decide exactly what is meant by titles such as these: "Education—Key to My Future," or "How My Education can Help Me Become a Better American Citizen." "The ideas flow!"

Let me share with you just a few of the thoughts that have developed:

"I can learn more about other cultures so I can learn to respect others better."

"I can discover cures for diseases that have taken away those that I love."

"I can learn more about how to resolve conflicts in a peaceful way."

"I can become a teacher so I can teach others to learn the importance of being educated."

As you can see, there are no losers in this essay contest. The writing alone of this essay produces thoughts never shared before.

The next step is the judging—a difficult task.

My principal and I choose and submit the three best essays and the three finalists anxiously await the results. In April, the winner is declared. The culmination is an awards ceremony in May, where at least 50 delighted students and their families arrive in their Sunday best, glowing in the aura of success.

These children will never be the same after this day! They have become special young ladies and gentlemen, filled with hope and promise.

I have now had six scholarship winners and I only wish you could see what this award has done for each of them.

I have seen shyness replaced by confidence, academic potential replaced by academic success, and apathy replaced by a desire to learn.

Of course there have also been the students that were already on the right path, who now have an incentive to remain there.

An added gift is the endless support given the recipients from their schools, families, friends and community leaders. There's nothing more beneficial to a child than knowing that people are proud of them. It is so true that it "takes a village" to properly raise a child.

A Wall of Fame now exists in my classroom. It lists the names of all my American Dream Challenge Scholarship winners. These students serve as role models to my present students, thus continuing the cycle of hopes and dreams for all.

Who would have believed that children so young could dream such dreams?

I can assure you that they do, and they need us to help make them come true.

[From the Durfee Hilltop, Apr. 2, 2000]

FOURTH GRADERS WIN THE AMERICAN DREAM SCHOLARSHIP

(By Renee Tessier)

"Children are the future; teach them well and let them lead the way." A line from a popular song in the 80's, and also a good summary of the message sent by Dr. Irving Fradkin at the ceremony last Sunday held for the 7th annual American Dream Challenge awards.

Students in the fourth grade from the Fall River Public, Catholic, and Charter schools attended an awards ceremony on Sunday, April 2nd to receive a scholarship certificate and congratulations for a job well done. These students, who are only 9 and 10 years old, were challenged with the task of writing a one page essay on "Why I'm going to be a better American because of my education."

Each class of fourth graders sent three or four essays chosen by their teacher to be entered into the contest. Then, one essay from each class was picked by a panel of judges. Each student received a \$100 scholarship which will be issued after high school graduation and can only be redeemed for the purposes of a higher education. They can also expand their scholarship by entering the American Dream Challenge Essay Contest again in the 6th, 8th, and 10th grades. If all contests are won, a student can earn up to \$1,000.

The kids also helped in recognizing their teachers for their help. Proclaimed as "Unsung Heroes," Dr. Fradkin and Senator Joan Menard congratulated teachers and principals for helping in the up bringing of such fine young people, and thanked them for their commitment to the students. Dr. Fradkin is quoted as saying, "Without teachers, we wouldn't have a successful country."

To further emphasize the importance of education, adult sponsors who made a difference in the Fall River area wrote essays of their own.

They wrote on the subject of their own lives and how education made them what they are today. Senator Menard, Mayor Lambert, and Reverend Lawrence were just a few of the participating sponsors.

Every student was set up with a sponsor and they traded essays.

The hope was that not only would the student learn from the adult, but that the adult would also learn from the student.

The students were also able to hear the point of view of Dr. Odete Amarelo, a co-chair person for the contest, and Dr. Peter Gibbons of Harvard University.

Dr. Amarelo compared a child's negative point of view to a pair of "wrong prescription" glasses.

She explained that sometimes kids look at things in a negative way and don't see the whole picture. They need to learn to believe in themselves. "All you need is to find the right lenses."

Dr. Gibbons, who was inspired by Fall River to write a book about local heroes, explained the importance of having heroes and teachers.

Someone to look up to is something every child needs. "Everyone needs a coach, a teacher, a hero."

Leaving with knowledge that "they can do anything in this world" given to them by Senator Menard, the kids look like they are well on their way to bright futures.

Hopefully they will continue their education as far as they are allowed and were inspired by the people that worked so hard for their benefit.

The "Scholarship City" is the birthplace of a phenomenon: mentors and students coming together to improve education around the country.

The influence of these inspired people giving back to the community is just the start of a new wave of greatness that will in turn create a better future for us all.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. CHARLES H. TAYLOR

OF NORTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, July 11, 2000

Mr. TAYLOR of North Carolina. Mr. Speaker, due to flight delays, I was unavoidably detained in North Carolina yesterday and unable to cast a vote on rollcall votes 373 through 378. Had I been present, I would have voted "yea" on rollcall vote 373, "yea" on rollcall